FRBR and School Libraries

Not too many years ago while preparing our shelf lists for retro-conversion to online MARC records, a colleague at Lexington (Massachusetts) Public Schools wondered why we had to have separate records for each of the versions of the same book. At their library media center, they added additional or replacement copies of a title to the original shelf list card, making notes at the copy level if there was different ISBN or publisher information. The library media specialist voiced the opinion that it made sense to list all the versions of *Charlotte's Web* on one card since kids just want the story and don't care whether it's a republication, paperback, hardback, or reprint. Little did we know that while we were busy assigning the different versions on our single cards to separate MARC records, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) was already working on a plan to reunite them.

> "By identifying the types of relationships that bibliographic records seek to establish, FRBR begins a conversation about how to bring out these relationships in our automated catalogs."

Although one would never guess from its title or acronym—the Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records—FRBR (pronounced Furber) presents a model that does just that, and it is a plan that is quickly gaining the support of library organizations around the globe. The FRBR Study Group was appointed by IFLA and issued its final report in 1998. The report redefines the basic unit of cataloging. In current practice, the MARC record represents a physical bibliographic entity. In contrast, FRBR recommends cataloging over four primary levels of bibliographic existence (or entities), and it parses out the elements of today's records across them.

By Amy Hart

Four Primary Entities

Works: To understand this hierarchy, let's look at our previous example. When we began our retro-conversion project, it became clear that our shelf list cards combined multiple versions of a title. Our library media specialists had made the logical observation that a new printing of Charlotte's Web, purchased because the old book had simply been read to extinction and needed to be replaced, was intellectually the same entity as its precursor. Added copies of popular titles, purchased because students were devouring the story (the abstract intellectual content), were also noted on the original card. The finer distinctions called for by current cataloging practice were rejected in favor of common sense. FRBR recognizes what our library media specialists realized. The first level of bibliographic existence (or entity) in FRBR is a work, defined as "a distinct intellectual or artistic creation" (FRBR 16). In a sense, the work is the "essence or idea" for which a creator claims copyright. In the FRBR-ized world, our library media specialists were on the right track!

Expressions: The next level of bibliographic existence defined in FRBR is an expression. Like the works level, an *expression* represents an abstract concept and is defined as "the intellectual or artistic realization of a work in the form of alpha-numeric, musical, or choreographic notation, sound, image, object, movement, etc., or any combination of such forms" (FRBR 18). An expression does not concern itself with the physical packaging of the work but with the form used to communicate it. If a library media specialist wants a Russian-language translation of *Charlotte's Web*, he or she is looking for a specific expression of the work. If a student requests a version of *Charlotte's Web* with Garth Williams' illustrations, he or she is seeking a particular expression of the work. If a blind student needs an audio or Braille edition of *Charlotte's Web*, he or she also requires a specific expression.

Manifestations: Entities become concrete in FRBR's third level of bibliographic existence where a *manifestation* is defined as "the physical embodiment of an expression of a work [. . .] [and] represents all the physical objects that bear the same characteristics, in respect to both intellectual content and physical form" (FRBR 20). Publication particulars become relevant at the manifestation level. The 1980 Harper and Row paperback edition of *Charlotte's Web* with the ISBN 0064400557 is a specific physical manifestation of the English-language expression of the intellectual content of the work by E.B. White. Note that *all* the copies of this printing are grouped together as one manifestation. Furthermore, the manifestation level is the basic bibliographic unit of current cataloging practice; hence, separate bibliographic records are currently created for every manifestation of a work. In other words, under current rules, our library media specialists should have had separate shelf list cards for each manifestation. And, as a matter of fact, as part of retro-conversion, they paid for separate MARC records for each.

Items: The last level of the FRBR hierarchy is the *item*, defined as "a single exemplar of a manifestation" (FRBR 23). It is the easiest to understand because it is the most concrete. For library media specialists, it most clearly correlates with a copy. Did a local author sign the library's copy of her latest work? Is there a large soda stain on the title page of copy 7 of *Artemis Fowl*? The item level is where this information would be recorded.

Why FRBR-ize OPAC Displays?

So, what did Lexington's library media specialists want to achieve by putting multiple versions of a work on one card, and, more importantly, what will FRBR achieve in moving to a four-level cataloging model?

In both cases, the answer is ease of access. In Lexington's case, the library media specialists were seeking the easiest way to look up a copy of *Charlotte's Web*. They knew that it was easier to find one card listing variations of the title than to leaf through a series of cards trying to figure out the differences among them. In FRBR's case, library media specialists are hoping that four levels of description can result in more coherent and logical search results in automated catalogs.

Putting theory into practice, what might a search for the Works-level title *Charlotte's Web* look like in a FRBR-ized catalog?

Search for Works-Level Title = *Charlotte's Web*

Screen 1—Results List

Work 1: *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White

Work 2: *The Annotated Charlotte's Web*/introduction and notes by Peter F. Neumeyer

Work 3: *Charlotte's Web*/Paramount Pictures presents a Hanna-Barbera-Sagittarius production

Select Work 1

Work 1: *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White

Expression 1: [with] Pictures by Garth Williams

Expression 2: Sound Recording

Select Expression 1 of Work 1

Work 1: *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White

Expression 1: Pictures by Garth Williams

Manifestation 1: New York : Dell, c1973, c1952. 184 p.; ill; 21 cm. A Yearling Book

Manifestation 2: 0673801292, Scott Foresman edition. Glenview, IL Scott Foresman, c1993, c1952. Scott Foresman's Celebrate Reading series

Manifestation 3: 0745103049. Large Print edition. Bath: Chivers, c1986. 214 p.; ill; 23 cm. A Lythway book

Select Expression 2 of Work 1

Work 1: *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White

Expression 2: Sound Recording

Manifestation 1: New York: Bantam Audio, p1970. 3 sound cassettes

Manifestation 2: New York: Listening Library, p2000. 3 sound discs. 4.5 hours. Unabridged. Performed by author

Two More Entity Groups: Responsibility and Subjects

As already discussed, in examining the bibliographic record, FRBR begins by identifying four levels in a Primary Entity Group (work/expression/manifestation/item). The report identifies two additional Entity Groups: a Responsibility Group (entities responsible for creating, producing, and disseminating Group 1 products) and a Subjects Group (a concept, object, event, place, responsibility entity, or a primary entity that is the subject of a work). Although FRBR is a complex theoretical model, library media specialists will recognize the basic components of a catalog record (author, title, and subject) in its three entity groups.

FRBR'S ENTITY GROUPS

GROUP 1	GROUP 2	GROUP 3
Primary Entities: Products of intellectual or artistic endeavor	Entities Responsible for creating, producing, or disseminating Group 1 products	Subjects of Works
• Work • Expression • Manifestation • Item	• Person • Corporate Body	• Concept • Object • Event • Place • Any Group 1 or 2 entity

Relationships

In Section 5 of its report, FRBR tackles the issue of relationships within and between entities. For example, in some OPACs, a search for the title *Charlotte's Web* will pull up *The Eye of the Story* by Eudora Welty. The title is listed because its MARC record contains a 505 contents note with subfield t (title) *Charlotte's Web*. The work is a collection of essays on specific literary works, one of which is *Charlotte's Web*. Thus, it definitely has a relationship to the original story. But does someone searching for a copy of the story want to see this title in the results list without any context? Similarly, *Horrible Harry and the Green Slime* by Suzy Kline can also appear in a search for the title. *Charlotte's Web* is mentioned in the 520 plot summary field. Again, there is a relationship between the two works, but one could argue it is not important. In both cases, catalogers have recorded existing relationships between the works and, through MARC tagging, have indicated their reasons. However, the relationship of the entry to the bibliographic entity is not made explicit in our current OPACs. Users searching for *Charlotte's Web* will be puzzled to find a *Horrible Harry* book in their results. The relationship (or lack thereof) will not be obvious.

FRBR identifies two kinds of relationships. Logical relationships are defined as existing within or between the three entity groups (e.g., an author is responsible for creating a work or a publisher is responsible for producing a particular manifestation of it). Secondly, the various kinds of relationships that exist between primary entities are delineated. For example, a work (or part of a work) can be related to another work, as the Eudora Welty essay on *Charlotte's Web* is related to the work itself. By identifying the types of relationships that bibliographic records seek to establish, FRBR begins a conversation about how to bring out these relationships in our automated catalogs.

Another Round: FRANAR for Authorities

In July 2005, the Working Group on Functional Requirements of Authority Numbering and Records (FRANAR) issued a draft report with an invitation for review and comments. Established in 1999, a year after FRBR's final report, the FRANAR Working Group was created in part "to define functional requirements of authority records, continuing the work that the 'Functional requirements of bibliographic records' for bibliographic systems initiated" (FRANAR i). Because the report is new, it's not possible to know what effect its recommendations will have on FRBR. However, the need to address authorities was clear and the FRANAR model will enable a new round of FRBR-ization studies and implementations.

What Goes Round, Comes Round

Did our library media specialists realize they were ahead of the profession in their approach to cataloging? Did they call what they were doing on their shelf list cards "FRBR-izing"? Probably not. And yet, you've got to hand it to them. They did recognize the concept of a *work* long before the FRBR Working Group presented it. Ironically, it was automation that brought a stop to their practice, and it will be automation that brings them back to it. ■

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USEFUL LINKS

- OCLC Research Activities and IFLA's Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records **www.oclc.org/research/projects/frbr/default.htm.** Two areas of particular interest are their studies into the feasibility of converting existing MARC records into FRBR-ized records using algorithms and their demonstration catalog, FictionFinder.
- RedLightGreen **www.redlightgreen.com/ucwprod/web/workspace.jsp,** a FRBR-ized catalog, is geared toward undergraduate college students and will be of interest to high school library media specialists.
- Visionary Technology in Library Solutions (VTLS) is an active implementer of FRBR. Information on their FRBR activities can be found at **http://vtls.com/Corporate/FRBR.shtm.** Their FRBR-ized OPAC features a mixed database of non-FRBR and FRBR-ized bibliographic records and presents the hierarchy of works, expressions, manifestations, and items through expandable tree structures like those in Windows Explorer.
- Innovative Interfaces, Inc. **www.iii.com.** Innovative has FRBR development in progress but has not announced a deployment date.